

News Release

For Immediate Release

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SPELL TO REQUEST WAIVER FROM EPA TO HELP RICE FARMERS IN MISSISSIPPI

Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell announced today that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) has asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for an emergency exemption to use the fungicide Quadris on Mississippi's rice crop next year.

"Almost all of Mississippi's rice crop is susceptible to a disease known as 'sheath blight,'" said Spell. "Quadris has been shown to be up to 90% effective in fighting sheath blight in preliminary tests, so it is very important that we make this fungicide available to our Mississippi rice farmers."

Mississippi ranks 5th in the nation in rice production. Rice is the state's 9th largest agricultural commodity, worth an estimated \$127 million in 1996. It is estimated that 275,000 acres will be planted to rice in 1998 in Mississippi, virtually all of that acreage in the delta. "Currently, there are no fungicides approved for use on rice that have demonstrated an ability to combat sheath blight," said Spell. "Our farmers need the opportunity to try this new product, which is showing real promise."

The request for exemption is made in accordance with Section 18 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, as amended. The department expects to hear

from the EPA within 90 days.

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